

Late Night Texts

Learning

Introducing the Parable (some example content you can engage with to prep and/or use as a group)

- **Read - Luke 11:1-13**
- **Context:** This follows immediately after the last parable with a small interlude about Mary and Martha. Although there is a clear break of events in chapter 11, it does feel like a relevant story for understanding prayer as a place of priority to be contrasted with our busyness and worry (Luke 10:38-42). Keep Mary's example in mind as you read.
- **Interesting Words:** The word friend (*philos*) is used four times in the parable, and implies someone you are actively fond of. The word midnight here just means the middle of the night! The theme of bread (*artos*) is carried between the Lord Prayer and the parable. The word in verse 8 is often translated as shameless, audacity, boldness, or importunity is *Anaideia*. This is the only NT occurrence, it refers to a deep bold unwavering persistence to not give up.
- **Culture:** In Palestinian village life there were built in expectations and social norms that would strongly pressure you to help anyone who asks something of you, especially if it involved hospitality and food. It would be inconceivable to the original audience that the man would refuse to get up and help, just as it would be inconceivable that the man asking would not do everything he could to find some food for his late night visitor.
- **Themes:** We can focus on the one requesting help and draw out themes of persistence, humility and boldness. Or we can focus on the one being asked and emphasize how if even a social pressure obliges humans to help one another, how much more is God willing and wanting to meet our deepest needs.
- **Quote for expanding the discussion:**
 - The words for "getting up" and "rising" in the parable are *anastas* and *egeirein*, and are also the root words used throughout the New Testament to refer to the resurrection. Let's think about some parallels. The man in the parable rises from his slumber to provide bread for his friend who is in need. Jesus will rise from his death (sleep) to provide the Holy Spirit to his disciples who are also in desperate need. The theme is to ask, seek, and knock. Perhaps, the primary teaching is not only about persistence in prayer, but rather about *the content of what we really need* and like Mary what we should really value most."

Dialogue Questions (some example questions for this content above)

- **Read a 2nd time - Luke 11:1-13**
- What core themes emerge from Luke's account of the Lord's prayer, consider going line by line? What themes stand out in the parable? What connections do you see between the two?
- What do you feel as you read Jesus', almost formulaic, instruction to "ask, seek, knock" and then his promise that it will be given to you? Does your experience align with this? How so or how not?
- Focus on the last line where Jesus says the Father will give the "Holy Spirit." This almost feels like a plot twist, we are no longer talking about "bread." What is the significance of this? What does it teach us about the Holy Spirit? What does it say about our needs?

Implication Questions (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- Try reading the quote above, pause for reflection. What does your group think about this?
- The parable seems to imply a level of human agency and responsibility in prayer. What has your level of engagement in prayer been in this season of life? Why do you think that is?
- What are your real needs? What things in your life masquerade as needs, but perhaps really are not needs? Consider bringing the Mary and Martha story into view as you reflect.
- Are there any responses this discussion is prompting?